DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 325 CS 205 839

AUTHOR Siegel, Gail: And Others
TITLE Sequences in Writing, Grades K-13. Curriculum Publication No. 13.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 60p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Department, Bay Area Writing Project, 5635 Tolman Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720 ($3.00 postage and handling)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Program Descriptions; *Remedial Instruction; *Sequential Approach; Sequential Learning; Teaching Methods; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Bay Area Writing Project

ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of a series of teacher-written curriculum publications launched by the Bay Area Writing Project, each focusing on a different aspect of the teaching of composition. It describes four sequences for teaching writing developed by four teachers at four different levels--kindergarten through grade three, intermediate grades, grades 9 through 12, and remedial--that share the following similarities: (1) all are based on the teachers' observations of the development of writing abilities in their students, (2) all treat writing as a process that may move through several stages rather than merely as the creation of finished products to be evaluated by the teacher, and (3) all view the teacher's role as one of assisting and encouraging student writers individually in finding the most effective written form for their ideas. (AEA)

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Sequences in Writing, Grades K-13

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University of California, Berkeley
Bay Area Writing Project

Curriculum Publication No. 13

CS205839

The Bay Area Writing Project is an effort by school teachers, college faculty, and curriculum specialists to improve the teaching of writing at all levels of education. The Project is funded by the CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK, the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, and the UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY. The findings of this study do not necessarily represent the views of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Individuals desiring information concerning The Bay Area Writing Project or the National Writing Project should write to Bay Area Writing Project, Tolman Hall, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.

Series editor: Gerald Camp

Cover design: Gene Izuno

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Preface

The notion of sequence is important in the teaching of writing; there should be no quarrel with that. But we know more about sequence today than we've ever known before, just as we know more about the teaching of writing today than we've ever known before. We know that the process of writing is the same process in the third grade as it is in the tenth grade. Gone are the days when secondary teachers, meeting in splendid isolation, planned a curriculum that would 'introduce' the sentence to ninth graders, the paragraph to tenth graders, and the five-paragraph essay—that monument to the American educational system—to eleventh and twelfth grade students.

This booklet contains four sequences for teaching writing developed by four outstanding teachers at four different levels. Readers will, however, discover a number of similarities between them. All four sequences are based on the teachers' observations of the development of writing abilities in their students. All treat writing as a process which may move through several stages rather than merely as the creation of finished products to be evaluated by the teacher. Finally, all four teachers view the teacher's role as one of assisting and encouraging student writers individually in finding the most effective written form for their ideas, their opinions, their dreams and fantasies.

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SEQUENCES OF INSTRUCTION, K-3

Gail Siegal

From Speech to Writing

"How do you spell 'oranges' without the 'o'?" a child asked me.

"What?" I said.

He repeated the question. I remained baffled. Finally he showed me his paper and I realized that he knew how to spell the 'o'. It was the 'ranges' of 'oranges' that he was struggling with.

For me, the anecdote illustrates an important lesson. Young children must learn the delicate synchronization of mental and motor skills required for writing. But the most difficult task is translating ideas into words. The child above knew what he needed from me, but not how to express his need to me.

I find it useful to view young writers as passing through a series of developmental stages:

1. Transcribing Stage
2. Re-copying Stage
3. Sentences/Whole Phrases Stage
4. Independent Stage

The stages aren't rigid; they have soft edges. Some children pass from stage two straight to stage four. For others, stages three and four happen simultaneously. In a kindergarten, first, second, or third grade class, I expect to find some children at every stage, depending on their individual maturation and writing experience.

I also find it useful to consider the developmental stages as coinciding with the student's progression from fluency (ease and confidence with language) to coherence (making formal and grammatical sense) to correctness (punctuation, paragraphing, etc.).

Transcribing Stage

Pre-writers need to have their spoken language transformed into writing by an adult. The children tell a teacher, aide, or parent volunteer what they want to say, and the adult transcribes the children's words into writing.

The sequence is as follows:

1) Child talks, adult writes, child illustrates; or 2) child illustrates, child talks, adult writes.

Children at this stage want to illustrate what has been written for them. Transcribed speech, or a pre-writer's "writing," usually involves simple sentences, while the pictures may be quite detailed. Pictures illustrate the feelings and details not expressed in the language.

For instance, one six-year-old dictated: "I feel bad because my Mommy and Daddy went away." Her picture shows a lone child standing in the open doorway of her home. The parents are leaving, holding their packed suitcases. The little girl in the picture has big tears rolling down her cheeks. Her face is obviously forlorn as the parents wave good-bye. The reader feels the emotion and impact from the picture, not from the transcribed writing. There is a narrative quality to a child's illustration.

In a primary classroom, particularly kindergarten or first grade, it helps to have several adults or older children available during the writing worktime to take dictation. Young children often have short attention spans and need someone to listen to them when they have ideas. Although children are not actually writing during this phase, they are developing foundations upon which writing will later build.

The following are further examples of transcribed speech of five and six year olds:

> Today we painted boxes for the Halloween play.
>
> At art we made a map of Ross and we put our houses on it.
>
> My Dragon – he lives in the sea. He is green and he likes to drink water. He cracked out of an egg. He likes to eat grass. He flies. When he flies he swoops down and catches birds and eats them. Sometimes he goes in the water and eats fish.
>
> My magic machine makes bubble gum and it crushes up rocks. They're not wrapped yet. Then they're wrapped and then they're picked up and then they're put in the box. It doesn't have a special flavor.

If these children are asked, they may be able to give more detail, but normally there is little "meat on the bones" at this stage. They tell stories about real or imagined events in short, simple sentences.

Re-Copying Stage

It is not long before children move into stage two and become re-copiers. This usually happens some time during the first semester of first grade. During the new phase, children still dictate, but they are able to re-copy what an adult writes. They can read, know the alphabet, and can hold a pencil. They feel an enormous sense of accomplishment when they can write on their own. They begin to view themselves as writers.

For children at this stage, the physical task is arduous. Holding a pencil, using an eraser, thinking of words and actually writing can be overwhelming to children. I frequently have them cross out each word they copy to help them keep track of where they are.

"Re-copy" writing has many similarities to the language of children in the transcribing stage. It is generally first person experiential or fantasy writing. Usually it is declarative and lacks detail, color, and substance.

A sample of class journal entries, as told to the teacher and then re-copied by the children:

> Robbie said in science that our heart is like our motor and the food is the gas.
>
> My Grandmother came to the play. I think she likes it a lot.
>
> Our Christmas banners are hanging all around the room and they are so pretty and green and sparkle and we can do more.
>
> We all learned our parts for the Christmas play and Mrs. Safford was happy. The boys do not want to be wearing tights.

Again the illustrations (and children's sound effects and verbalization during drawing) have the action and detail that the writing lacks. These children are given plenty of time and experience with telling and re-copying. Their writing is read aloud, displayed, published, and enjoyed. Gradually they gain the tools and confidence to pass on to stage three.

Sentence/Whole Phrases Stage

Children at this stage of development know what they want to say and are able to write down some of their thoughts independently. They are eager to write for themselves and are learning to be comfortable with words and thoughts, and consequently less dependent on adult help. Adults are available for help with phrases or whole sentences as the child needs them. For instance a child at this stage may ask the teacher to write "once upon a time," but that same child will then finish the sentence independently. Their writing sounds much like their speech and has characteristics of the first two stages of writing:

> I wonder how the raining got up in the sky so it could fall. I like rainy days because my Mom sometimes gives me hot cocoa.
>
> Yesterday I made a pre school for my brother we sang and played it was fun we have candy cans the end.
>
> last night is was raining so hard that our lights went out I had to get our hoemkeper I went out in the rain I went in my bare feet.

These children have the confidence to write even though they are making errors in spelling and grammar. What matters to them now is that they can write. Correctness and neatness can be considered after the

initial writing is on paper. More importantly, fluency is now developing. Stage three writers are exploring how the language works and can translate their ideas onto paper. The task of transforming mental images and language into written words becomes less burdensome. Like new walkers, they slowly forget the awkward mechanics and get from one point to another with less conscious effort. The more frequently these children write, the easier it becomes for them to write. They begin to add flavor, color, detail, action, and characters to their writing.

Independent Stage

At some point during the sentence/phrase level, children begin to rely on themselves almost completely and may only ask an adult to supply an occasional word for their writing. As they become independent writers, many children gain fluency and begin to work for greater coherence. Young writers working to become coherent are concentrating on making sense and building structure and sequence into the writing. They may not be conscious of this process, but the writing shows evidence. During this period writers need to be able to hear their work and to have an opportunity to re-draft the pieces of writing. Of course these young independent writers may still struggle with either fluency or coherence:

> I like books because I like reading what most like the pictures what I like are the *"Where's Wallace?"* and *Curious George* and *Spiders*, and *Miss Nelson is missing* and *a Great Day for Up* and *Here Comes the Strike Out.*
>
> —Seven Year Old

This child is having difficulty with fluency. The thoughts are flowing so quickly in his head that it is impossible to get all of the necessary words on paper. As the student has the opportunity to share his writing, he will notice gaps, or the teacher or writing group will point them out.

Another example, this time of a child working on coherence:

> Last night I had a dream. That a big fercious monster came and took me to a planet called Pluto. And then he took me to see the king. The kings said you are on the plant Pluto. Do you have any sweters I said. No he said. I better go home and get my sweter. O.k. he said Zoink take her back to get her sweter so Zoink went back to my house and I got my warmest sweter on and went back to Pluto and saw the king. He said you a going to help us do experiment were going to turn the statue of liberty into a flying diamond so we can go back to pluto.
>
> —Eight Year Old

The author has little difficulty with fluency, although there are some minor omissions. She needs some work on sequence and structure, so that her story is clear and has purpose. She will have a chance to read her dream aloud to the class and then, after some peer and teacher response, she can make any changes she feels are necessary to complete this story.

Although both of these children are fairly independent writers, they need to hear their writing read orally so that they develop an ear for the sound of the language. Eventually they will learn to correct omissions and add missing thoughts as they experience this group sharing.

Sequential Teaching Strategies for Writing

I find it helpful to view the steps I use in teaching writing as a sequence. These are not ironclad rules; rather they are processes which encourage and facilitate writing. This is the sequence: oral language, pre-writing, group writing, individual writing, sharing/re-thinking. I use these strategies for children at any of the stages of writing development, whether they are transcribing or independent writers.

Oral Language

For many writers, particularly young children, the initial touching of pencil to paper seems like crossing the Himalayas. Constant pencil sharpening, playing with the eraser, getting the right paper, and other delaying tactics seem necessary. I have found that oral language experience prior to writing is of primary importance. Once children have a fund of vocabulary, it is much easier for them to begin writing.

The oral language part of writing involves developing a bank of key words which can be used in the children's writing. A young writer needs these words to draw from, just as a builder needs bricks.

If my class is going to write about "Fall," we brainstorm for several days. Children suggest words or short phrases such as "leaves turning colors," "crisp," "horseback riding on trails," "scrunching leaves on my way home," "crunchy apples in my lunch," "walnuts," "Halloween," and so on. These words are recorded on the board or on butcher paper and displayed for several days as additional words come to mind. The wealth of vocabulary that the children already know is tapped before the act of writing. When the actual writing takes place, many of the necessary words and phrases have already been "rehearsed."

Pre-Writing

Pre-writing is all of those experiences that the teacher plans for the class before they write. It may include reading aloud selections by other children or authors on the particular topic. As they listen to what someone else has written, children can consider the wide range of possibilities open to them. Films, experiments, cooking, art, or personal experience all provide illustrations from which young children may draw when they are ready to write. My class wrote easily about trees after we had taken tree walks, listened to tree poems, discussed familiar trees, and looked at tree bark in the microscope.

> A tree is the best place for building a fort, because it is cozy. No one can find you there.
>
> —Seven Year Old

A tree is nice because if something rolls down the hill, a tree can stop it.

—Six Year Old

Trees live almost anywhere, in streams, or lakes. Trees are important for food. We could not live without trees. They are good to live in or to use to build your house.

—Seven Year Old

I have found that writing facilitates the teaching of other subjects such as science and vice versa, an effective symbiosis. As part of a science unit, my class studied seeds and plants. The writing that took place prior to our study was non-descript, one-dimensional:

a seed is a small thing

seeds make plants

You put seeds in dirt and they grow

After our science study, the children's writing flowed more easily and was more vivid because the children had had numerous experiences with plants and seeds. Seeds had been soaked and cut; they had sprouted and were then planted. Logs were kept about these experiments. The children had become observers. Plant word lists were on the walls. Through writing, they were then able to explore what they had learned and experienced as well as what they thought:

A seed is part of our food chain to live. A seed is something that lives. We can eat seeds. Seeds grow and make plants. You have to have seeds to make a new plant.

—Seven Year Old

A seed can grow into a big bush in many months. A Seed can have a maroon coat that protects it. If you soak a seed in water overnight, it will get very wrinkled and the coat will be light. I have grown a bean plant and a corn plant from seeds.

—Seven Year Old

The children's experience is reflected in their writing. Exploring what they know, young writers may try a more poetic form:

If I was a seed...If I were a seed, I would be protected by my cover. My little red thing around me. When my cover turned wrinkly, I would be scared half to death.

—Eight Year Old

If I was a seed, I would stretch and grow my leaves. I would wish my owner would not be clumsy. I would want a nice owner who would talk to me. If a farmer picked me and cooked me with my other bean friends, that would be sad.

—Seven Year Old

When oral language and pre-writing are part of a writing lesson, the final writing is like a well rehearsed play. The language and experiences are part of the practicing.

Group Writing

For young writers, group writing is a helpful third step before (or in conjunction with) individual writing. It helps them to try out their ideas in a group before they write on their own. Both the pre-writers and writers in a given class can participate and feel successful in group writing. An adult or a child working with the group records the children's oral contributions. Children have an opportunity to hear what other children think. Group writing displayed in the classroom also becomes a reading experience for young children.

Describing a field trip, keeping a class journal, creating a class play, or writing a letter to the principal are all possibilities for group writing; the list is endless. Beginning writers can create a class poem in which each child contributes one sentence, for example:

IF I WERE

If I were a snail I'd let you come in my shell and I will show you my slime that I leave behind.

If I were a horse I would roam the country.

If I were a flea I would be somewhere nobody knows about.

If I were a great white shark I would let you ride me as long as you want.

If I were a caterpiller I would crawl up your arm and make a rainbow with my silk.

Individual Writing

The successful development of writing and other cognitive skills requires that children have the opportunity to write about what they know, what they experience, what they have learned, and what they dream or fantasize about. They need to experience writing in many different modes: directions, questions, reports, stories, haiku, poetry, jingles, plays, tall tales, fables, and journals. Varied writing coupled with daily writing practice allows the child to become comfortable with the task itself, and consequently writing improves.

I teach spelling and language mechanics as independent subjects in my classroom. But I find that frequent individual writing conferences are good times to help individual students with usage and mechanical problems. Writing habits are more readily learned this way than by filling in pages of drill. For example, if children are using conversation in their writing, then in our conferences (or as I circulate in the room) I will teach the use of quotation marks.

Exposure to many different kinds of writing is crucial to young writers'

experience and development. As they hear how the language works, they realize the vast possibilities that exist for writing. They learn how sequence is used, what words work well, and what kinds of characters are interesting. I read to my class several times a day to further this exposure. On some days when they come in from recess I read humorous poems, and at the end of the day I usually read from a continuing chapter-type book.

Sharing/Re-Thinking

Young children love to share their writing aloud as soon as it is on paper. Regular writing-sharing sessions in both small and large groups allow children to hear their writing and to realize what may have been left out, or how much they assumed the reader already knew.

Group response is encouraged during these sessions and occurs in a structured way. For primary children, a set format will provide the necessary constructive response. I tell listeners to try to keep two questions in mind:

- Is the writing clear?
- What else do you want to know?

This type of response takes practice and has to be continually modeled by the teacher.

Following the response-sharing session (or teacher conference), the author can go back and re-formulate the piece of writing. Re-thinking and re-writing are periodic and necessary writing activities. My students don't re-write every piece of writing, but every month or so they choose a piece of writing to re-work, writing that is going to be read by other students or published in some way.

Writing is a satisfying if difficult task for young children. They gain confidence as they develop fluency. Their writing helps them clarify thoughts, ideas, and dreams. Children realize that writing is an important tool for self expression:

> We would be pretty dumb if we didn't know how to write. If we couldn't write we couldn't read. There would be no leters. You would not be able to read a book. It is fun to write. Writing is inportant because you can communicate without saying anything out loud.
>
> —Seven Year Old

SEQUENCES OF INSTRUCTION, INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Lynda Chittenden

During my first ten years of teaching at the upper elementary grades, a realistic structure for my own teaching of composition did not exist. The county courses of study were intimidating in their scope and detail. Perhaps of equal importance, they suggested a sequence and methods of instruction which simply didn't work for me in the classroom.

There were also "language arts" textbooks which were colorful, had a more realistic sequence, and even provided a script for the teacher to follow. But I didn't find them helpful either. The content never reflected what was actually happening in my classroom, and the script didn't help me deal with the variety of individual differences in pace, readiness, and achievement.

Then a "creative writing" school of thought became popular, based on the implication that children simply needed to *write* to be effective communicators. To "correct" their writing was to inhibit their creativity. So the students wrote and wrote. I read their stories, but was never able to answer my own question of "what next?" Their papers piled up, most students remained frustrated with writing, and I had a vague uneasiness that very little was being learned. With my uncertainty about what to do, I grew not to care very much about those stories and neither did the students. Consequently, I began to require less and less writing from the students, and naturally they were less and less receptive to any writing assignment from me.

But after working for two years with the Bay Area Writing Project, I have developed a sequence of instruction for the teaching of composition which is not only practical and useful, but which accurately reflects what children *can* do! I now feel able to answer the "what next" question for each student individually. My teaching sequence has two components, the first of which follows the development of the students as they struggle to master writing:

DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE

FLUENCY ⟶ COHERENCE ⟶ CORRECTNESS

At the beginning of the school year, I find it important to look diagnostically at each child's writing and decide where he or she is along a line of writing development. This development begins with a student first achieving *fluency* in writing. From fluency, a student moves to working on *coherence* in writing. Once a student has achieved reasonable coherence in his writing, we then begin to work together on *correctness.*

I define *fluency* in writing as a child's ability to put initial thoughts on paper without struggling. A student who has not achieved fluency can be easily spotted in the act of writing even before I've seen his paper. He probably fidgets, is easily distracted, keeps asking questions about what he's supposed to be doing, and needs constant reassurance that what he's doing is okay. His writing has many omissions, rare punctuation, little supporting detail, and often jumps in content from one thing to another. The many omissions make it difficult to tell what his "sentence sense" is (i.e. how able he is both to recognize and write a complete sentence).

I define *coherence* as that stage at which the student's writing generally makes sense. While writing, that student will appear purposeful and will need only the spelling of certain words and other help in "mechanics." If that student has had experience in writing/response groups, she will often want to read what she's written so far to another child. She will want to know if she's making sense, or will want to talk about the language choices she's making. A piece of writing from a student at this stage generally does make sense, is written in complete sentences even though they may not be punctuated, and includes some supporting detail. It is rarely paragraphed, but it follows a coherent line of thought.

It is with small groups of students at this stage, students who are in the midst of revising pieces of their own writing for "publication," that I teach the mechanics of punctuation, spelling, and usage. I have found that it is only in this context that instruction in mechanics makes any sense to students and where any transfer of learning takes place.

I define *correctness* as that stage at which the student writes fluently and coherently most of the time and is usually correct in the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, and usage.

At the beginning of this last school year, I discussed with my fourth and fifth grade students this continuum of writing development. I then told them that I needed a piece of writing that I could use to diagnose their development. I said that we would write in class the next day and that they should come prepared with something to write about. We brainstormed to suggest some possibilities (e.g. a fictional story, a piece about themselves telling me things they wanted me to know, a detailed review or "opinion" of a book or T.V. show, or of course, "My Summer Vacation"). Letting them know ahead of time what would be expected enabled them to "rehearse" (practice ahead of time) what they would write about and how they would organize and write it. We also discussed the concept of "rehearsal" and how it could be an aid to writing.

The next day only three students came with nothing to write about. The rest of the class started writing while I talked further with these three. It took only a brief discussion (which I think functioned primarily to reassure them of my seriousness) and they began writing. I set neither a minimum word limit nor a time limit. I merely said, "Write until you're finished."

Here are some typical examples of intermediate students whose September writing is fairly fluent, but still not fully coherent. Most students at this level of writing, when given a multitude of forms from which to choose, will choose to write "stories"—to them, writing is story-telling.

> One 10 years ago there where 2 men, Joe & Alan. Alan had 2 kids a wife and lived in a small house. Joe lived in a small house to but had no wife or kids. They both worked at the sandville minds and got about 2$ an hour. They where on assignment when Joe found a cave. They went it it, went to the end & came out. But when they came out it was a different place. Below them was a big cannon. Joe had a rope and said he would climb down it. So they did, but not as they expected. Because when Alan 10 feet off the ground the rope snaped. Sudenly Alan spoted a bright light. So they went to it. It was a passage to the sandville dessert, so they new they must be close to the town. Finely they got home. They have nevwr told this story to any of there freinds up to this day.
>
> —Eleven Year Old Boy

> It was the month of Oberon when professor Johnson and dr. Reide where going to drill through the center of the Earth. it was the month of Junoe of the year 657n. They hade a big stycillick that was a machine with a big drill on one end and a treds to whip out the tracks. they were reaching the ceter now wehn the power ran out. And then out of no where radiation. then the door busted open. "oh no ants" said dr. Reide. "the ants are intelligent" said professor Johnson. The ants took them to their King. their King was a humun. the King was nice and granted then freedom.
>
> —Nine Year Old Boy

These boys have a sense of what a complete sentence is and have a fairly good, if inconsistently applied, grasp of punctuation. They also have a sense of the narrative: both pieces have clear beginnings and endings. The primary writing goal for these boys is to write a lot, focusing on including all necessary words and more supporting detail. They also obviously need to work on the pronunciation and spelling of basic words. For the next months, every writing assignment done by these students is evaluated in terms of success in meeting these specific goals. That evaluation is continually done by themselves, their peers, and me.

Once students have some understanding of that linear development of writing and have achieved a fair measure of fluency, I encourage them to take "language risks" in their writing. Through reading, being read to, and

listening to each other's work, their language awareness is growing. They begin to realize that they have choices of different vocabulary, phrasing, and styles. They hear new ways of putting words together and begin to try to use them. Therefore, at the *coherence* level, a variety of individual problems appear.

Here is a student who begins by trying to include detail, but has difficulty with *how* it's done:

CAMP!!

There I was ridding on the bus to camp wait what is that in a distant field there? it was a deer it was leaping through the brush it was gorgeous! Finaly we arived it was about nine oclock we met our counselors...

—Ten Year Old Girl

By working in small response groups, reading her work aloud, and listening to others read their efforts at coherently including detail in writing, this girl was later able to revise her piece:

CAMP!!

There I was ridding on the bus to camp. "Wait what is that in a distant field," I thought, I looked closer. A deer was leaping through the brush it was gorgeous! We drove out of sight, of it. Well it was nice wile it lasted. It was boring the rest of the time. Seeing farm after farm is nc' fun. Finaly, it got dark it wasn't as boring then because I couldn't see anything out side. Finally we arived it was about nine oclock we met our counselors...

This student writes fairly coherently, but has difficulty with organization:

KENYA

In Kenya our main bace was Nairobi which is the main city in Kenya. We stayed in the Hilton Hotel. A man from a tour agence drove us to game parks where we stayed in the lodges and went out in the evening and at about 6:30 in the morning. The main tribe in Kinya are the Massi. The wemen ware big round neck lecklesses and the men carry spears and sheleds. The animals we saw mostly of were zebra, willderbeast, buffalow and hippos and so much more. We saw 4 loin mothers and about 9 cubs eating a willderbeast! We also saw a male loin which is very rare!! We past over the equator and my dad said if you pass it in an airplane the toilet will flush the wrong way. We saw the massi men dance. They jump into the air super high! The men wear a strip of cloth and lots of juillrey. The wemen wear a peice of cloth made into a sort of dress. The Massi are sort of tall but not as tall as people say they are. They only drink cattle blood and milk and...

—Ten Year Old Girl

Reading this piece aloud to others, she easily heard this sequencing problem and stated that in a revision she would keep all the animal information together and then tell all about the "Massi."

Here is a student who writes quite coherently. She includes some detail and her story has no organizational problems. Her difficulty is another one typical of a student at this level:

THE ELF VILLAGE

Once there was a group of elves. They lived in a little town with no name. They lived very happily. Until, one day the village caught on fire! yells and screems cold be heard miles around. Everyone got away. Nobody was hurt. The mayor said, "Let's find another place." Everyone agread and went off to get ready. They came back ready to leave. So off they went. They was many places. But they would have to be cleared. They went on. Sudenly they heard a growl. It was the dragon. Everyone ran and hid. The dragon got a little boy. Then he went on. They came out and went on. Only very slowly, they were sad about the little boy. But then someone saw just the right place. it had places for homes and a little stream and paches of grass. They all rushed to it. They all started to build. And lived happily ever after.

—Nine Year Old Girl

Her sentences, although technically complete, are simple and immature. Her goal now becomes writing "meaty" sentences. Through weekly spelling sentence and sentence-combining exercises, a class list of "Words Which Help Us Write More Interesting Sentences" evolves (i.e. *which, who, although, after, while, when).* Children then begin to share with each other their successful "meaty" and "interesting" sentences, and growth in sentence complexity occurs. Teaching the grammatical terms is unnecessary.

Often students who have previously written at the coherence level start taking language risks and reach for "better" language. Sometimes this reaching is done at the expense of coherence.

THE DREADED SIAMESE

The dreaded Siamese was perched up in a tree looking down on a mouse hill. when a gigantic avocado came rolling in and when it was rolling out it knocked over the tree that the cat was sitting int, it fell like a pitcher pouring milk...

—Ten Year Old Girl

This girl was praised for her language and humor, but reminded that her primary goal was that a piece makes sense, and that sentences should be punctuated. A few weeks later, this same girl wrote a scary Halloween story:

TO KILL THE LIVING DEAD

Over the hill, under the wind, through the dark forest and down, down, down beneath the door of the dead.

At midnight in the door of the dead everything was calm until the peek of night the edge of death came. The dead were alive.

The priest of a town called Edenburge went on a long journey through the woods to kill the living dead because if he didn't they would kill him. He walked for days to find them, but they were nowhere in sight.

The sun went down quickly, and the moon came up. Night fell before him.

He didn't know what was happening, terror penetrated through his skin, the cry of terror spoke out, "Go back, go back." he stepped back a few steppes not realizing that a few more steppes back might lead to the door of the dead.

With a sudden movement he pulled out his bow and arrow and shot strate up in the midnight darkness, thinking that that's where the voice came from...

She received a great deal of sincere praise from her peers for this story and "terror penetrated through the skin" of many subsequent sentences written in the classroom.

Sometimes a student's writing is technically both coherent and correct, and yet he takes no language risks at all. Getting this type of student to begin to risk is often more difficult than dealing with the results of risking:

I went up the Sacramento River in an ₵ which stands for International One Design Class. It is a sailboat that is built to race. It is thirtythree feet long and it has a six foot beam. They don't have very much living room but they have enough room for two people to sleep in the cabin.

My dad and I went up the Sacramento River to Steam Boat Slough. We stayed there for a week. There were a lot of beaches and there were a lot of people on the beaches.

After a while we went back and we had a nice sail back.

—Ten Year Old Boy

This type of student is helped by being exposed to some of the language risks others are taking. I ditto student work, I encourage formal and informal oral sharing of work, and I continue sentence structure and sentence-combining exercises. I try to create a classroom climate which encourages and rewards language "risking" and "reaching."

This year, in a class of twenty-seven fourth and fifth grade students, there was only one student at the *correctness* level of writing in September:

A TRIP TO EARTH

"Ouch, Crazy thrower!" mumbled Cathrine, "Sometimes I wish he had better aim than that!" Cathrine Davis was on the middle-aged baseball team. Today she was playing left field. Jake Collins was pitcher. The runner had just hit the ball into right field. Joe was playing right field. Joe missed the ball, but he recovered it quickly and threw it to the pitcher's mound, where Jake caught it. The player rounded second, and was on his way to third. "Quick, throw it here!" Cathrine had said. Jake threw the ball, and missed. The ball had hit Cathrine in the leg. Her leg killed, but she still went up to Jake, and kicked him in the behind. "You jerk!" she said, "Someday, I'm going to get revenge on you!" She stomped up to bat. Jake rubbed his behind. Then he said, "Just throw the ball." Right then a U.F.O. appeared in the sky...

—Ten Year Old Girl

This girl subsequently has had great difficulty revising any of her work. A "final draft" for her is usually nothing more than a completely new "rough draft" of a similar story. A timid perfectionist, she has needed a great deal of hand-holding to get her to trust her instincts enough to know that if she senses a part of her piece is incomplete or unclear, it can be "fixed-up" rather than scrapped. Otherwise, for her, revision merely means starting over and still being frustrated with the finished product.

In addition to the developmental sequence students go through as they master writing (fluency → coherence → correctness), I have found it most helpful to look at each writing task as having its own sequence. This sequence can be labeled many ways, but every writing assignment should begin with a few or many *pre-writing* activities. Then, the actual *writing* is followed by some kind of *post-writing* activity.

Pre-Writing

Any child, no matter how skilled, rarely finds success in writing if he is asked to sit down and write without having had any time to prepare for that particular assignment. Field trips, art activities, individual and group reading, and group literature activities are all important pre-writing experiences which expose students to new ideas. All of these experiences give children much to think about, and through "thinking" and daydreaming, they are exploring these ideas. Thinking goes along with talking: small and large group, formal and informal discussions—all focused talk is pre-writing experience which also helps children to explore and organize their ideas. The connection of pre-writing experiences to success in writing is one which intermediate-age students can easily understand. Once they see that connection, pre-writing activities become even more profitable for them.

Writing

Most pre-writing activities are "group" in nature. Each student must then take up pencil and commit his or her own words to paper. It is quite appropriate at this age that the writing be primarily a solitary activity, although it is also appropriate sometimes to share in the process of group writing. Whether writing alone or in a group, students will often need to read their work-in-progress to each other before completing their pieces.

Post-Writing

I define *post-writing* as everything from an oral sharing of a finished piece of writing to actually "publishing" the work in some form. Post-writing also includes occasional revising or reformulating a piece of writing. I find revision is both easier and makes more sense to students when accomplished through small writing groups where they read and respond to each other's work with the goal of improving the piece. A frequent practice of whole class "group response" helps students to respond to each other's writing, and it also helps build a "community of standards" for composition. The following steps in group response have worked for me in the classroom:

- First, the writer *reads* a brief piece he or she has selected to share.
- The group then tells the writer what they can see he or she *knows* because it is in the writing. (This response can be to the content: "I can really tell that she knows how boring it is to ride on a bus" or to a language goal: "She knows how to begin a story and get your interest.") Alternatively, the group could simply tell the writer what the *strengths* of the piece are.
- The group then *asks questions* of the writer, thus making it known what more they want to know or what part of the piece is unclear.
- The writer then *tells* the group what he or she would add, change, or correct in a revision.

Underlying the sequences of instruction which structure my classroom writing program are some basic assumptions about what is necessary in language learning:

- Students need to write a lot. My students are informed at the beginning of the school year that they will write every day. Thus, the question is never whether or not they'll have a writing assignment, but rather just what the nature of the daily writing task will be. The quantity of "group groans" will diminish considerably when students accept that they *will* write and need only know from you *what* they will write. Also a great deal of self-initiated writing begins and the rush to the "In Box" of completed work ends.

- Assignments are done by all the students. Daily journal writing, working on stories, writing brief responses to given topics, (i.e. "What are the dreams of one born blind?"), writing about their learning processes in learning logs, or working on informational "report" writing are tasks appropriate for all of the students.
- Evaluation of the student's work is done individually in terms of the writing goals which have been set for that student.
- Writing is not something done only during the "language arts" period of the day. Writing is a tool of learning and something I require of my students in every aspect of the curriculum.
- As teacher, I also need to write and share my writing process with my students.
- Practice and drill in spelling, handwriting, and punctuation are best done outside the classroom. Individually prescribed exercises and workbooks which deal primarily with drill and practice in mechanics make very appropriate homework assignments.

Whether one has a self-contained classroom or a departmentalized "English" class, I believe that writing can be used as the core of the curriculum. Using the organization I have described has greatly improved my teaching while also making it more rewarding.

SEQUENCES OF INSTRUCTION, 9-12

Jean Jensen

The Evolution of a Writing Program

1966, a vintage year for English teachers: the Dartmouth Conference brought teachers from all over the world together to discuss the state of the profession and resulted in the publication of Dixon's *Growth Through English* in England in 1958. Roger Appleby and James Squire's *High School English Instruction Today* appeared, a report studying the English programs in 158 high schools in 45 states. The names of Hook, Diederich, Hogan, Loban, Christensen, Miles, Macrorie, Kozol, Holt—an endless list—were beginning to become familiar in some colleges and high schools. James Moffett's *A Student Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13, A Handbook for Teachers* was published. Across the land teachers were asking for answers which research and reports on innovative classroom techniques could provide. And in Walnut Creek, California, after fifteen years of stumbling through the yellow, red, green, and blue volumes of *Building Better English*, the Las Lomas High School English department enthusiastically if blindly began the development of a curriculum based on the growth cycle of the students in our classes.

To teach effectively we knew we must continue being learners. We wrote class assignments with our students in all classes, sharing our papers with them. We visited one another's classes, observing strategies, discussing results. We shared lesson planning sessions as well as miscellaneous dittos. Some of us read prodigiously and shared what we read at department meetings. We argued, questioned, reported at brunch, at lunch, during preparation periods, after school. We retired our grammar books to dingy corners in the backs of closets and prepared our own style sheet—a condensed collection of information about punctuation, spelling, and usage.

Las Lomas's writing program, having undergone its initial birth trauma, began to grow. We had acted on our firm belief that for too long publishers of grammar texts had dictated the English writing curriculum from New York to California, from Texas to North Dakota.

Planning Our Courses

In 1970 we separated the writing program from the literature program because we believed that writing about literature is significantly different from other writing tasks. In 1971 we bought Ken Macrorie's *Telling Writing* for our Advanced Composition classes. And in the spring of '72 our Faculty Council voted to use our style sheet for all students in every department.

It was not until late 1975, eight years after the publication of James Moffett's book and one year after the initiation of the Bay Area Writing Project, that we outlined in writing the Las Lomas Sequential Writing Program. Even then we felt that, although the freshman and sophomore programs developed logically, we were not satisfied with either of the two junior and senior courses. Practical Composition proved far from practical, and we questioned the breadth and scope of Advanced Composition. Back to the drawing board. Now we directed our efforts toward the juniors and seniors. We experimented, failed, tried again, and ultimately succeeded in developing a program which satisfied us, at least for a semester.

Writing From Experience

We agreed that all people write better when they enjoy writing, so we engaged our writing classes in activities providing experiences in the real world outside their classrooms. Our enthusiasm sometimes produced classroom experiences verging on the weird. However, they also produced writing which excited and pleased its audience—the students. In some classes students looked at the world as they lay prone on the classroom floor. Sitting in the warm sunshine, their backs against blossoming crab apple trees, they examined, thought about, and then wrote about blossoms, bees, trunks. They walked down to our creek and wrote about floating boxes, old bottles, rusty cans, abandoned shopping carts, sections of bedsprings, and minute creek creatures. They flew kites on the football field or sat high in the broadcasting booth and then wrote. They visited Kaiser Hospital across the street, or ventured into the Hickory Pit, a restaurant, walked over to Quail Court, a business complex, and observed Benny Bufano's mosaic statue of a hand. The papers they wrote as a result of these experiences became more than mere observations. They provided material for developed, controlled essays. Our department meetings were filled with a new excitement because our jobs had become, for the most part, exhilarating. Teaching English had itself become a trip.

From Experience to Idea

As we have worked in the program, we have realized that in order to justify any major curriculum change we must have a solid philosophy based on research. For this reason all members of the department have either read or listened to digests of Paul Diederich's *Measuring Growth in English*, Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, Ken Macrorie's *Uptaught* and

A Vulnerable Teacher, and James Moffett and Betty Wagner's *Student Centered Language Arts and Reading*.

As we read we discovered that many people agreed with us that spelling and punctuating are of secondary importance in the teaching of writing. Also research shows that naming parts of speech or diagramming sentences has absolutely no relation to success in writing. From James Moffett we learned that students do not write enough, nor do they write in enough different modes. Piaget appears to corroborate our experience that freshmen and sophomores do not write well if they are asked to produce expository writing because they are not mature enough to master "formal operations" or the ability to make conscious abstractions. Moffett also describes the ability to sustain abstract discourse as a late development in students. Our program allows students to progress from enriched experiences to a recording of what is happening to writing which generalizes and theorizes. In ten years, then, the program has expanded to include our growing knowledge, and we believe that we are finally providing a bridge between experiential writing and writing which is concerned with an end outside itself—informing, persuading, and instructing.

The Las Lomas Writing Program

The Setting

Las Lomas is a four-year high school of about 1200 students set in the middle of Walnut Creek, a suburban area under the shadow of the University of California at Berkeley and of San Francisco State University in San Francisco. However, Diablo Valley Community College, fifteen minutes away, provides the next educational experience for most of our students. These students come predominately from middle and upper class career-oriented white families, although each year we enroll more students from minority races. All ninth grade students plan to attend a four-year college, but by the time they reach twelfth grade the number has dwindled to sixty percent. Only fifty-one percent of any incoming freshman class will complete all four years at Las Lomas. In any given year, all but about fifty students are enrolled in one or more classes in English. We suspect that although we teach in a typical suburban school, the ideas which we use successfully will work with most students and for most teachers.

The Program

The English program at Las Lomas offers students semester courses only. Freshmen and sophomores must take writing one semester and literature the other. As juniors they enroll in one of the fairly traditional literature elective classes, although students who wish to take Advanced Placement English in their senior years may take Advanced Composition as juniors. All students must pass an upper division writing course to graduate. Seniors, therefore, choose between Advanced Composition, which is designed for students who plan to attend a four-year college or university, and Practical Composition, a course for those who plan to attend junior college or to get a job.

The entire Las Lomas program is based upon a model which sees writing as a process with three identifiable though overlapping stages: prewriting, composing, and editing. The chart below, developed by teachers in the St. Louis Area Writing Project when I worked with them in 1978, illustrates the variety of activities that can contribute to each stage of the process. Descriptions of these activities can be found in the works of the authors listed (see References). This model of the writing process is the basis for the writing course at each grade level. But different activities are used to help students develop prewriting, composing, and rewriting strategies at different age levels.

Establishing a Sequence of Activities, 9-12

Freshmen

Differences in the maturity of writers appear in the pre-writing stage as writers learn to identify an audience and to select an appropriate voice.

MODEL OF THE TEACHING AND WRITING PROCESS

St. Louis Area Writing Project
ESEA Title IV-C
(Revised, BAWP, 1980)

Freshmen need to expand the number of forms they are able to choose from: letter, memoir, autobiographical sketch, journal, diary, monologue, or dialogue. Other differences emerge during composing and revising. Freshmen write description and narrative easily, especially when they write in the first person. As soon as they try to write exposition, however, they turn out sad, spineless, boring *Engfish* (a term used by Ken Macrorie to suggest the language students think teachers want.) Freshmen enjoy sentence combining, but have difficulty with the concepts of subordination and coordination. Freshmen are always in a hurry: they complete a paper, hand it in, and expect a grade two minutes later. They believe that to revise is to produce clean copy. They have difficulty seeing where they need help except, perhaps, in spelling. They know when they like a paper, but they seldom know why. Sometimes a very good freshman writer can identify sentence fragments or run-ons, particularly after having finished many O'Hare or Strong sentence combining exercises. Freshmen need to do much "talking about" before they begin to write.

Sophomores

As sophomores students become acquainted with cumulative sentences, the type of sentence Francis Christensen identified as the basic building block of modern prose. They work on modification, coordination, and subordination and quickly become able to write more mature sentences. Because students have shed most of their writing inhibitions by the end of their freshman year, we feel that published examples will no longer intimidate them. We want them to be aware that published writers use the same techniques they are experimenting with, so we ask them to read such autobiographical authors as Joan Baez, Gordon Parks, and Maya Angelou. As they struggle with autobiographical fragments of their own, students look carefully at the way these writers use language.

Juniors and Seniors

When we began teaching Practical Composition, the course consisted of a complete review of freshman and sophomore writing followed by nine weeks of such assignments as writing resumés, filling out applications, and writing letters of various kinds. The course had little appeal, and it became clear that changes were needed. We began by inviting members of the business community to speak to the class. One of our speakers, a woman from the State Department of Employment, told our students how important writing could be in preparing to enter the job market. "You must write a great deal in order to find out who you are and what you want to make of your lives," she told them. "When you are almost written out, then learn to do the practical things." Her comment suggested new possibilities for this class. Students now write assignments such as a personality sketch of a person who has made a strong impact on them. They use techniques practiced in previous years to observe, interview, and write. They write

papers which answer questions like, What satisfies you? What do you dislike? What skills do you have? How can you prove you have them?

During the second nine weeks students read Studs Terkel's *Working* and write summaries of three jobs. They listen to and question managers of condominiums, used-car salesmen, or gas-station operators, describing their jobs and writing short summary opinion papers. They also tape a job interview and meet with the teacher individually to critique it. As a result of these changes, Practical Composition has become one of the more popular classes.

Advanced Composition has also changed since its beginning. Because of the improved uniformity and general excellence of the teaching in the ninth and tenth grades, we are able to cover in nine weeks what previously had taken eighteen. The saturation report, previously the final paper, is now the midterm assignment. Students now progress through additional expository assignments which culminate in a synthesis paper using all of the writing techniques covered in the course. Ken Macrorie's *Telling Writing* provides specific techniques to make student papers clear and forceful: selection and ordering of detail, creating tension through the use of oppositions, telling facts, dialogue, tightening, sharpening, repetition. These students see the usefulness of the expository essay and are able to select the appropriate techniques for their purposes.

Establishing an Atmosphere of Trust and Respect

All English classes spend their first weeks establishing a warm and friendly classroom. Freshmen play a variety of values clarification games. As a group they interview the teacher and then individually interview each other to help them get acquainted. In some classes students engage in oral activities like identifying themselves with specific flowers, food, animals, cities, television shows, or sports cars. These oral games help both teacher and students begin to see the class members as individuals. Other classes do a number of free word association writings which they read aloud.

Tenth-grade classes spend time talking about experiences: the earliest they remember, embarrassing moments, times they were really afraid. In some classes teachers find students are more comfortable "making up" stories which they can share.

In junior and senior classes, students introduce themselves by writing limericks using their own names. Teachers may ask them to write a list of three things about themselves they are willing to share with the class and three things they will share only with the teacher. Everyone reads his or her "public" list and the discussion centers on the makeup of the class and its likes and dislikes. Generally the first composing assignment is "Bring an object which you will never want to part with. Write a paper in which you describe this object and tell why it is important to you." The personalities of the students are clearly on display during the week the class

participates in this activity. Certainly by the end students feel comfortable with both the class and the teacher. The teachers encourage a group feeling by actively participating in all of these activities themselves.

Making Assignments

As a department we have agreed on several procedures to follow in making assignments. First, the teacher never makes a new assignment until the last one has been graded, commented upon, and returned. We rarely ask students to write a single paragraph unless we are doing finger exercises. Instead the typical assignment will begin "Write a paper..." Students learn that audience and purpose determine the length of a paper and that changes of place, person, subject, time, and sometimes tone dictate divisions into paragraphs.

We never mark all errors on a paper because we believe students seldom learn from this practice and indeed sometimes become so inhibited they cannot write at all. Instead we write comments in the margins and a long note at the end suggesting revisions, responding to ideas presented in the paper, and listing perhaps one or two types of errors the student needs to work on.

Each teacher is free to experiment as she or he pleases, but generally the class spends time between long assignments working on shorter, in-class assignments including sentence combining, coordination, and subordination. Freshmen and sophomores also do improvisations as a pre-writing activity. Some days are devoted to workshop-type classes.

Most of the teachers in our department believe in writing their own papers to assignments they give their students. Students need to know that we really think writing is important, and seeing us struggle with the same writing they're doing helps us convince them.

We do not use outside readers to help with our paper load. Readers tend only to "correct" papers, and in our program, this is not enough. We read all papers ourselves.

Editing Groups

This year we introduced the use of editing groups in all classes, whereas previously we had only used them in Advanced Composition. Each group consists of five to seven students who remain together for the whole semester. At one time the teacher selected the members of the group, and in some classes it still seems wise to do so. In most classes, however, we allow students to group themselves because self-selected groups seem to work more efficiently than the teacher-chosen groups.

At the beginning of the year we encourage a discussion among students about the value of playing an active role in this group. Students must discover that unless everyone contributes his ears, his voice, and his paper, the group cannot function properly. We have them identify traits of a "blocker," a "mover," a "monopolizer," a "facilitator."

Editing groups meet the day the first rough draft of an assignment is due. The teacher distributes check sheets applicable to the specific assignment containing questions like:

Can you hear the voice of the writer?
What is his main idea?
Is it explicit or implicit?
Which is better for this paper?
Does the paper begin and end well?
Is the writer aware of his audience?
Are the tone and diction appropriate?

In addition to questions, the sheet will contain a check-list of problems the teacher believes may arise: mis-use of passive voice, weak verbs, too many adverbs, lack of subject-verb agreement, dangling participles, run-ons, fragments, problems which have appeared in student work and have been discussed in class. The list grows longer as the class does more and more writing. We tend to emphasize different editing skills for each paper.

The students in each group may choose either to read the papers aloud or silently or both. They discover that sometimes the voice of the reader changes their perceptions of the paper. Comments are supportive and specific. Freshmen students say, "That's a neat paper, I like it because the same thing happened to me and that was exactly how I felt." Freshmen learn to talk about special sentences or words they like. They learn to recognize words or sentences which are misplaced so that the meaning is not clear. They become able to hear a good beginning or a satisfactory conclusion. Seniors move to, "Aren't you shifting tense? Maybe you should throw out the first two pages and begin with the third." Sometimes when a student reads a revised and polished paper in class, someone will say, "You did what we suggested. Wow, what a difference!"

Freshmen work less well in groups unless the group task is carefully structured. They work well with check sheets which are turned in at the end of the period.

Public and Private Papers

Students who are very unsure of themselves as writers are often hesitant about exposing their writing to the whole class. For this reason we categorize papers as either "public" or "private." Public papers are those the student writes for a public audience; private papers may be read by an audience of one—generally the teacher. Either the student or the teacher may decide a paper is private. Frequently in the beginning students will label even the most neutral papers "private." Soon, however, with the teacher's encouragement, students begin to see the value of sharing papers in the writer's voice and become more willing to read their papers to the class. Because of the importance of response from other students as well as from the teacher, this aspect of our program is crucial. It is only when the student realizes that her problems are shared by others, when she sees

the teacher struggling too, and hears the teacher's paper read aloud, that she discovers the challenge and excitement of learning to write well.

Revision

By the time a student is a senior, he has been reading his papers either to an editing group or to the class for three years and should be fully aware of the meaning of revision. Unlike the freshman, for whom revision means clean copy, the senior realizes that much thought goes into selecting the proper word, focusing so that his audience will follow his ideas, deleting and adding when necessary. The ability to revise well depends upon how well the student has retained information covered in his earlier English classes. We try now to give him the professional writer's vocabulary so that he has the correct names for concepts he has been mastering since ninth grade.

We do little whole class teaching about any grammatical problem unless the mistake appears frequently in students' papers. We have found that when we teach a grammatical or usage concept before its time, the next papers tend to include that particular error more frequently than previous papers have.

All students are encouraged to revise and resubmit papers until they are satisfied with them.

Sample Assignments

Below are examples of some of the specific assignments we have used successfully. I have included samples of student writing done in response to each assignment.

Sensory

We repeat our assignments adding more complex requirements during the four-year period. The first sensory assignment for freshmen pairs them and sends them to various locations in the school: the library, the faculty room, the commons, the auto shop, the attendance office, the nurse's office, the activity director's office. On their return to class they discuss what they've seen, and write a single short paper as a group.

> As kids straggle in, they line up for lunch. At one end is the hall where students noisily push and shout giggling and laughing. At the other end is the cash register where students pay for their lunches which usually consist of pizza, salad, milk, and French bread. They take their trays to the sunshine and lawn or to the commons where they sit with their friends. Some sit alone at tables in the commons; some outside on long wooden benches; some sit on the grass. They divide themselves into loners, jocks, stoners, rah rahs, and then there are 'the others.' Perhaps these are the most interesting. Some of them just read. Some of them just sit and never look up. The bell rings finally and all leave; the commons and the lawn are deserted, strewn with brown bags filled with garbage or with candy wrappers. Everywhere it is very quiet.

At the senior level, students again go to specific places on campus, but instructions now are to report back with sentences using the techniques they have learned in sentence combining exercises. Since all students forget, their writings are horrifying, amazing, and sometimes delightful. We ditto all of them and use them for discussion and review.

> The spindly legged freshmen meander lazily out in the command of their mechanical half lunged teacher. They arrive at the tennis courts where the teacher hoarsely barks instructions to the comatose students as they hit tennis balls to each other. With their warped and loosely strung menace rackets. The sagging nets are uselèss; games are all that is seen in a hailstorm of tennis balls over a sea of green asphalt. Finally, the period ends with a shrill whistle from the decrepid teacher. Unenthused students stumble towards the locker room and the court is abandoned.

Certainly this writing lends itself to all kinds of discussion—sentence fragments, passive voice, word choice, even the use of the semi-colon.

Because we will have from five to ten similar paragraphs it is possible to review a great deal rapidly.

Memories

The freshman can write memories, but his are incomplete and often immature. He cannot stay easily with one subject because he has not yet understood the value of brainstorming to expand or enrich a single idea. He has not yet learned how to focus his writing.

A Memory

> The warmth of the sun beaming down woke me. I climbed out of the warm sleeping bag onto the still dew wet earth. I gazed over the river. It was thirty feet wide now from the rain last week. The Christle clear water molded around the smooth rock. It traveled at a pace twice as fast as I walked, making shoots, dips and whorls flinging water into the air. The opposite bank had boulders larger than I that have been etched by the constantly running water. Beyond the land stretched up into an enormous mountain. The left side of the mountain was bright green with small trees and grass. A few large gray rocks columned up to make sheer cliffs. The right side was an ugly black burn left over from the fire last year. I could see no vegetation. I decided to take a dip in the cold clear water. The sides of the river were shallow and here the water slowed because of the rocks. I stepped off a rock and into the cold ankle deep. The icy water sent a chill up my legs. I stepped on a rock, slipped off, stumbled back and then fell in totally submerging myself in water which felt as cold as death. I jumped up and tried to run out, but I fell on the rocks. I discovered two kinds of rocks: slippery and hard. I slipped on the slippery ones and fell on the hard ones.
>
> —Ninth Grade Boy

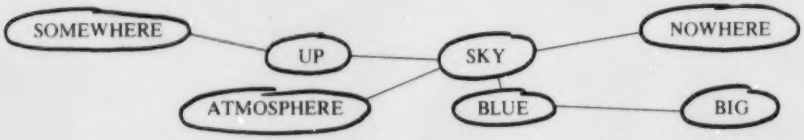
The senior has learned to focus; his memories are specially selected to fit his purpose and his form.

> Orland is a small town not far from Chico. It has a main street four blocks long, two dime stores, a hardware store or two, a Big Joe's Supermarket, and a small J. C. Penny's. For action all the girls sit around and get fat while all the guys watch the alfalfa grow. Orland has two kinds of weather, cold and wet or hot and dry. A summer in Oreland is a sauna without the steam. And Oreland in the summer is heaven. Oreland is where my grandfather's farm is.
>
> —Twelfth Grade Boy

Clustering

A technique we learned from Professor Gabriele Rico of San Jose State University, clustering works well in any class. Students are instructed to write a key word, usually supplied by the teacher, on the center of a piece of paper. Then, letting their minds flow freely, they write whatever associations occur to them, drawing lines to show the relationships between the words. Whenever they can see an idea fully enough to develop it with a beginning, middle, and end, they stop clustering and begin writing.

The cluster below began with the word *up*. The instructions were: "Cluster whatever comes into your mind. When you think you have enough ideas to write, do so. Be sure to come full circle."



What is nowhere? Who knows? Not me! Everywhere (if there is a somewhere) has to be somewhere. If you're out in the middle of nowhere, you're somewhere. There is no such thing as nowhere because everywhere is somewhere.

Nobody has ever been to nowhere, so how does anyone know that there is a nowhere? We don't. But, why then, do we say, "Nowhere?"

I don't know why we say "Nowhere," or where nowhere is, but when I asked my mom if I could go to the movies this weekend, she said, "You're going nowhere this weekend." What can I say? I didn't want to go "nowhere" anyway.

—Ninth Grade Girl

Clustering works well both in literature and writing classes. Because it is spatial rather than linear, relationships not always apparent become visible surprises. It also provides a way of reviewing materials in other subjects. The center of a cluster may be a word, a name, a line of poetry, a quotation. Students learn easily how to make their writing come full circle. The sophomore paper below is a good example.

Autobiographical Fragment #2

I really hate the Walnut Creek Bart station. I can't stand to go there. I hate the way everyone sits around looking stupid, waiting for the shuttle bus. I hate the way people think they can operate the machines and end up having to call the attendant for help. Then they both hold up the line.

Finally you get inside. The train just got in and any minute I am going to be attacked by business men coming home from work. Here they come, swarms and swarms of unseeing mean

faced men. As usual they push me all the way over to the other side where I don't want to go.

Now there is a giant flight of stairs, 29, 30, 31, 32,...top. The top is different. There are usually just two or three people up here at this time. Finally the lights flash above me...Concord...the train arrives. The doors open and swarms and swarms of businessmen attack again. After I almost get squished by the closing doors, I step aboard. Everyone stares at me. The train starts and I fall backwards as a big jolt tells me I am on my way to Pleasant Hill. They are still staring when I pick myself up and find a place to sit.

After a bit we get to Concord. The doors open and I get pushed down stairs with the traffic. Now I am one of the people who knocks everyone over to the other side of the station and that's another story...

—Tenth Grade Girl

Here is a senior paper—longer—which begins and ends with both focus and a flare.

A cool, whispering breeze lapped at my face and hair as I sat at the top of the cliff, one hundred and forty feet above the ocean. I was alone, gazing across the flames which were engulfing the setting sun. Long streamers of orange and red and purple heralded the setting of the sun on this particular evening. What had once been a brilliant ball of fire in the sky was soon a glowing ember, sinking in the vastness of the Pacific distorting as it did so. Like some mushroom cloud from a nuclear explosion in reverse, it grew smaller and smaller until it fell beneath the waves to light some distant land. I was calmed, hypnotized almost by this scene. Then—WHAM—a cold knife of panic stabbed. A paper, a saturation paper due in English.

"Don't they understand? Elk is not a place for writing. Never was, never will be. Elk is a place for hiking, fishing, seeing, talking, looking, and sometimes for reading, but never for writing.

. . . . . .

Even though the whole area was stripped of redwoods in the late eighteen hundreds when Elk's population numbered 1200, this second growth of trees seems primeval. The redwoods cover the steep sides of the creek canyon, cutting the sunlight to create a twighlight even at noon, and muffling all sounds. This atmosphere allows only for whispers. The road is slowly being

destroyed, washed out, or overgrown with ferns and plants of the forest. The few manmade pieces from the past used to exploit this wilderness are being engulfed by the same growing wilderness. Unlike many places on this earth, Elk's natural forces are overtaking man's endeavors, and I'm glad.

Elk is not a place for writing. Elk is not even a place for reading about. Elk is a place for experiencing first hand.

—Twelfth Grade Boy

Free Writing

At one time we required every student to keep a journal. Because of the size of our classes we have replaced that requirement with a twenty-minute free writing done in class every third week. The papers below illustrate the variety of forms students choose.

The growth from freshman to senior appears in the following typical selections.

LIKES

These things I love to see:
A sunset before the day turns dark
Children laughing and teasing
A blue and endless sky on a hot day
These things I love to hear:
Loud music ringing in my ears
A brook churkling as it continues its journey
Birds chirping in the early morning
These things I love to feel:
A cool breeze on a summer's night
Hot sun against my back
My kitten's fur brushing my bare leg
These things I love to taste:
Ice cream spilling down my throat
Hot chocolate on a winter night
Snowflakes melting on my tongue
These things I love to smell:
Steaks broiling in the oven
Flowers in early spring
The dew-wet morning air

—Ninth Grade Girl

Sophomores move from enumerating to choosing, arranging, and reflecting.

POEM

The wild horse
  fast, smooth
Running through
the open grassy fields
Hoofs slow down
  legs slower
    body
      slower
        stops

Still, calm,
standing like
a statue
gazing into nowhere.

—Tenth Grade Girl

POEM

The bee
came
Swarming toward me.
  I
held still
  and
  he
landed on
my
  arm;
 slowly
the stinger
  came
  out
  and
entered my
  arm

—Tenth Grade Girl

And I am proud to introduce S. K., world famous orchestra conductor. The cheers of my colleagues, the lights, the trumpets, the trombones, the drums all reached into my heart as I stepped forward receiving recognition at last. The harmonious sounds of the orchestra reached a climax as I accepted the award I had so long labored for. I was smashed back into reality by the honk of a horn. A car passed.

I dodged a little closer to the curb, continuing to run and realizing I ought to get off this busy street. I turned onto a shady, lonely, and comfortable side road. Listening to the pitter patter of my feet on the cool asphalt as they slowly pick up the tempo, I return to my thoughts...

D. R. was piter pattering over the PA system and a special announcement caught my attention. "I would like to call for a moment of silence this morning dedicated to S.K. who died across the street at Kaiser a few moments ago..." Dead stillness around school, great sorrow. I felt like yelling to the whole school to tell them I was not dead, but I knew it was useless.

I reached the end of my road and continued along a path in a tired sort of way, conserving my energy to enable me to continue without stopping.

Smelling the smells of cows and of hills and watching my breath vaporize, I trudged over a small pass between two sleeping giants. I climbed the back of one and perched myself in its head. There were things I wanted them all to hear. I realized all at once that even if they did, they wouldn't have given a damm.

I was thankful for my existence, for my own world. And suddenly I realized that this is what makes running fun.

—Eleventh Grade Boy

JJ's great black body leaped through the bushes. The muscles of his legs flexing along his black coat as each paw returned to the ground and then pushed away again. His nose was tight to the ground sniffing the wet Sudan grass and he sounded like a vacuum in the middle of a thick shag rug. His tongue lolled out almost hitting the ground whenever he looked up. He was exhausted, but he never stops.

With a sudden burst of enthusiasm he began to travel faster, his tail wagging happily like a windmill. Narrowly missing JJ's crushing teeth, a large cock pheasant exploded from a bush sending feathers drifting to the earth. I pulled my shotgun to my shoulder and fired off two shots but the pheasant continued on up only hurried by the thundering of my gun. JJ turned his head from the flying bird, his expression showing his disgust at my poor marksmanship.

Thinking about that day now, I remember his proud head and keen brown eyes which looked up at me affectionately. I never wanted the day to end or my dog to stop being my dog. But even then the killer cell was working.

JJ died of cancer two months later.

—Twelfth Grade Boy

Interview

One of the most successful assignments we give is the interview assignment seniors write. As we have done with all complex assignments, we have developed prewriting activities to prepare students for the writing of the paper. First we ask them to arrange themselves in pairs, preferably with someone they do not know well. Each member of the pair then chooses a role to play. These characters must be as different from each other as possible: the hostess at the local bar and the Queen of England. For twenty minutes these "people" converse in writing. During this time only giggles disturb the quiet classroom. When the twenty minutes are up, students read their papers aloud. This activity teaches students how to ask and answer questions, requires them to review the use of quotation marks, and reminds them that they must select materials for their papers carefully. We then distribute the following dittoed assignment:

Select a person over forty to interview. He may be a friend, an acquaintance, a relative, a stranger. Select a time when you can talk uninterruptedly for at least half an hour—an hour or more is better. Make an appointment. Think about your questions

before you meet. Try to think about questions which will allow you a glimpse into the many facets of this person's personality. Encourage him to elaborate. Ask questions which will elicit detailed answers. Listen carefully. You may use a tape recorder if the person does not feel trapped by it. Take careful notes if you do not use a recorder.

In your paper include a physical description of the person and of the setting. Try to establish and maintain a definite tone which will add a dimension to your paper. If possible, try to organize by idea rather than by time.

This assignment brings together several kinds of writing: dialogue, reporting, description, and always those telling facts. You must digest verbal as well as experiential data and include both in your paper. We want to see this person as he appears to you.

You are responsible for clever use of dialogue. Should you be unsure about how to punctuate, or how to introduce it into the body of your paper, be sure to check the dialogue in any published interview or in any piece of fiction.

After the assignment is handed out, we invite a member of the school staff to be interviewed by the class. We spend one period interviewing. Every member of the class must ask at least one question. We warn them to be wary of "yes" and "no" answers. We urge them to pick up on hints the person drops about himself. The next day everyone is to have a single multilevel sentence capturing the "essence" of our interviewee. These are all read and discussed.

Below is a sample of the papers that result from this interview assignment:

CHAZ

"On my first night of work in a hospital as an orderly and lab technician I was asked to take a body down to the morgue. I tried to transfer the body from a stretcher to a gurney, but it fell on the floor. I attempted to pick the body up, but it was like picking up a bag of mush. I rolled, dragged, and pushed the body across the floor and with a burst of energy stood it up in a corner. I put the body over my shoulder and eventually got it delivered to the morgue.

"I had another unpleasant experience with a corpse when a three hundred pound preacher died of syphilis. I was supposed to take the body down to the morgue and put it on a refrigerated slab. The gurney was a foot higher than the slab, and when I rolled the body off onto the slab the supports broke. The body and the slab both crashed down onto my feet. I spent three hours in that morgue with my feet trapped underneath that fat preach-

ers body until an orderly finally discovered me," said Charlie T. as we sat in the backyard of his modest suburban home.

With the sun shining brightly, a breeze drifting through the trees, and leaves cluttering the lawn, he went on to add, "thats how I paid my way through college, working forty two hours a week at a hospital in Cincinnati.

In nineteen sixteen Charlie T. was born in a small town in northern Kentucky. He spent his early years working on his grandfather's farm and going to grade school where he met his future wife. Work on the farm was hard, but it supported the family along with the money from his father's trucking business.

"I was a poor dirt country boy just trying to earn a living," said Charlie. He still looked the part as he sat across the leaf covered table in muddy old work clothes picking the dirt off his hands. He had been working in his garden.

When Charlie was sixteen his uncle became interested in airplanes and Charlie spent a lot of time barnstorming with him. Charlie learned to fly and helped his uncle build a biplane which the design of was later bought by the Wakle Aircraft company.

"I learned to fly in a Curtis Robin biplane and flying was a lot easier in those days. All you needed to fly was a compass, a turn bank indicator and a road map."

At one point Charlie held a commercial pilots license, but he quit flying because it became too expensive.

When I asked him about the great depression and how it affected his life he replied, "It didn't. We didn't have any money, but we always had plenty to eat because we lived on a farm."

Charlie went to the University of Cincinnati and played semi-pro football for a team that was to later become the Cincinnati Bengals.

"I got ten bucks a game. I quit after one year because I was too small; they played too rough, and I was getting the hell beat out of me."

During college he became interested in research biology and ichthyology. He spent many a night fishing with a friend at a pond in a nearby cemetary. With the fish they caught, they were able to study the growth rates of the fish in the pond.

After college Charlie married his childhood sweetheart, Lois. He spent the years of world war two helping develop an anti-malaria agent. This synthetic drug helped prevent U.S. soldiers from getting malaria while in the South Pacific.

In nineteen fifty-eight Charlie and Lois moved from Cincinnati to California. Charlie got a job with _____ Laboratories as a research biologist. He helped develop the first fertility pill. I asked him more about his research work. His eyes began to glow

and a smile reached his lips. I knew that I had touched upon a subject that he really wanted to talk about.

"Its all about being able to influence physiology. Creating a molecule that is built the same, but blocks the receptor sites within the body. Its basicly a "lock and key" theory and it was my job to help find the key, to help cause fertility in women."

He continued to talk about hormones, estrogen, testosterone, steroids, and non-steroidal substances. It was a little hard for me to follow, but he made it all sound so simple.

Today Charlie T., better known as Chaz to his friends, wears glasses, chain smokes, has a stocky build and is sixty two years old. He is the Director of Corporate Compliance at _____ Laboratories. His job is to see that the companie's plants apply to government regulations. Charlie has two daughters and two grandchildren whom he sees often. He dislikes his present job and hopes to retire by the end of the year. He wants to pick up some of his old hobbies which include fishing, hunting, boating, waterskiing, and gardening. His favorite hobby is fishing and he wants to do more of it once he retires.

After shaking Charlie T.'s hand and thanking him for his time, I left his green leafswept backyard and headed for my car. I realized what a contrast there was between the early years of his life and the present. He has come from being a poor dirt country boy to being and extreemly successful pharmacologist. He has built himself a successful career in the research area of pharmacology and has spent forty two years in the business. It seemed to me that he was now ready to relax and spend more time enjoying life. I think that Charlie is now planning on going back to being a country boy again and spending a lot of time fishing.

Conclusion

In the ten years since we have separated writing from literature, we have grown more dependent on each other as teachers and writers. We write assignments with other teachers who teach the same classes; we talk about our craft in department meetings; we admire the other members of the department as professionals. At the present time we look forward to a year in which we are to begin the development of a program for our literature classes which will mirror our writing program. We hope to evolve a focus for each literature class which is rational and increasingly complex. We will then design assignments that will provide students with opportunities to use the same writing techniques they use in composition classes. Meanwhile the composition program continues to grow and change as the world changes; and we change too, because as we read, discuss, reflect, we discover new ways to intrigue both ourselves and our students.

TEACHING THE BASIC STUDENT

Jan Wall

When we all came to Laney College ten or twelve years ago, we came to an unusual situation. Laney was a large inner city college with a sixty percent minority student population. We all came within a five-year period. We were young; most of us were not long out of graduate school. The English faculty increased from two to twenty within a short period. The original two teachers were Shirley Nedham and Oliver Kellogg, who were surely the most progressive of all possible old guards.

Like most English teachers, we had been trained in Shakespeare and Hawthorne and Chaucer. No one had ever taught us how to teach composition, and certainly, no one had ever taught us to teach reading. But we were interested in teaching or we would not have come to a community college, and we were willing to work with the students now defined as "non-traditional." We were convinced that even though our students had serious educational problems, they were not fools. And, God help us, some of us were probably even asking ourselves what we could do for our country rather than what our country could do for us.

A tradition of complete non-interference grew up in the department. We could do any foolish thing we wanted in our classes, and no one would bother us, not the department, not the administration. Wally Homitz was president then, and he believed that traditional methods were failing with our students, so we should try new ones. "If they don't work, we'll change them." He practised his preaching, team-teaching hare-brained multimedia and touchy-feely courses that had huge drop-out rates.

And so did we all. Our students showed us what worked by sticking around, or what didn't work by leaving. We shared what worked with each other, and for the most part, listened to each other. When things went badly, we just didn't say much about it. As soon as possible we tried something else.

Homitz was an articulate and inspiring president. His short and somewhat tempestuous term left a permanent mark on the teachers at Laney. I am grateful for his brilliant if somewhat erratic leadership.

Our students were generous and patient with us while we learned. We wasted the time of many of them, and I'm sorry about that. I comfort

myself with the thought that I don't know of any other school where they would have done better, and perhaps they wouldn't have done so well.

We understood early that most of our students were not traditional students in the academic sense, but as Theodore Gross observed in the *Saturday Review*, the parents of the next generation of academic students. Unlike him and his colleagues at CUNY, we never considered the possibility that teaching them was not worth while.

The political climate of the area and the time added to the urgency of our job. People talked of revolution all the time, inside and outside our classes. The faculty went on strike. Someone pulled a knife on the president. One of our commencement speakers showed up in dark glasses, his mortarboard at a rakish angle, so stoned that he couldn't come to the end of a sentence, much less to the end of his speech. In spite of all this, we doubted that any revolution would come. Our students wanted to make it, to succeed in the good old traditional American ways, and I came to feel that the decision had to be theirs. I decided that I would teach anything that they wanted to know, and if I didn't know how, I'd try to find out.

We never reached agreement. About half the department still teaches traditionally structured academic composition. About half of us use some variation on the approach described here, with many individual adaptations. I think this diversity has been a great strength. It gives our students a choice, and maintains our freedom to go on changing as we feel the need.

Developmental Sequence in Composition

In composition classes, and in writing centers particularly, we often assume that the sequence of development is sentence-paragraph-essay. If the student can't write a successful essay, we have him write a paragraph. If he can't manage that, we teach him the sentence. If he can't do that, we teach the period, the comma, and maybe the semicolon, and this study is a great weariness of the flesh. I don't believe that this imagined sequence is real. These steps backward become lobster traps that open only one way, so that we never work our way back to writing about important things. The result is often what my colleague Marlene Griffith describes as "fragmenting the skill and isolating the student."

We stumbled upon a developmental sequence in teaching remedial students at Laney which was already known to teachers of learning disabled children. The developmental sequence in language use is listening-speaking-reading-writing.

Reading remediation was the first priority. At first, this was less because of any developmental theory than because of the extreme disability nonreaders suffer in our society. Not being able to read is almost as devastating as not being able to walk. Not being able to write is less crippling. Now, our experience confirms the finding that reading precedes writing, and that remediation in writing will be limited unless remediation in reading precedes or accompanies it.

Free Writing

The next sequence is that fluency in writing precedes form and correctness. Many of our students, intelligent adults with adequate reading skills, have simply never had the experience of transferring their perfectly good oral skills and ideas into writing.

A colleague wandered into a bookstore one day and happened to find a copy of Ken Macrorie's *Uptaught*. He began to experiment with free writing techniques in his classes and was soon button-holing us in the hall and making us listen to the remarkable essays he was getting from his students. We finally listened; and indeed, they were good, much better than the essays I was getting about the causes of the Viet Nam war and the pros and cons of smoking marijuana. (That's what passed for relevance in those days.)

Free writing enables the students to use the skills they already have in narration and description and persuasion to achieve fluency. Gradually, we learned from our students that fluency can and must be taught.

For the first two weeks of class, or longer if necessary, ten or fifteen minutes of each class are set aside for free writing:

> I'm going to give you ten minutes to write. Write whatever comes into your mind that you're willing to share with the people in the class. If you decide you don't want to share it, put a note at the top and I'll see that it's confidential. If nothing comes into your mind, write "Nothing comes into my mind," but keep the pencil moving. Try to cover a full page of paper in ten minutes.

From the beginning, these free writings produce interesting fragments. The fragments are used in class as examples of good writing: images, metaphors, descriptions, whatever turns up. Most of them will look like this:

> Today is a good day. I'm going to try to get a job today. I'm praying to God that I get one. I really need one. I'm tired of bumming off of my dad.
>
> Everything today so far is going good.
>
> I'm bored with my Psych. class. I'm learning a lot in every other class. I think I'll drop my class. Is all I need is a job and a car, and then I'll be the happiest person in the world.
>
> I'm hungry and tired. My hair is dirty. I need to take a shower. I want to go home and start on the job hunting. I feel it in my bones, I'm definitely going to get a job!

Once in a while, something like this will turn up:

> You told us we might mess the paper up a little, bend the corners and it might get smaller. I know the feeling of a big sheet of

> paper, but all I've ever done is put paint on them. And for me to put the small end of this pencil to a sheet of note book paper is something I've not done many times. When you said something about ideas & words coming out of you like water from a faucet. The words come to mind of what would an artist do if paint was flowing from those faucets full force and he had twenty foot canvases stacked in front of him as I do these small sheet of 8½ × 11 green lined paper. When the paint starts to run and drip in to the shape and forms he want's how will he stop all the shapes from running in to each other? How will I know when I've read enough books, worked out enough paper for English class? What I really want to know is will I be able to stop the shapes from running together? And when will I know it's time?

As the good fragments turn up, they can be dittoed or put on transparencies. We discuss the fragments, asking, "What makes this sentence good?" "Why does this description work so well?"

At the same time, we study student models of good writing, fragments as well as some short pieces. The example above is by Tim Sutherland, and appears in Myrna Harrison's *On Our Own Terms,* a collection of student writing from Laney published with all the warts. These examples of brilliant fragments don't seem out of reach of the students, and the experiences described are familiar to them. I would suggest that each teacher collect his or her own student models, for it is important that the students be able to identify with the writers.

Using the models, we begin to work on what I call the *horribles.* These are the three or four most serious errors that make a paper look illiterate. They must vary from school to school, but at Laney, they are 1) lack of indication of paragraphs, 2) random use of capital letters, and 3) run-ons and comma splices. We practice editing the models to correct these errors, first as a group, then individually, moving to exercises from a handbook. I like *Grassroots* (Houghton Mifflin) because it is straightforwardly written and offers three levels of difficulty in the exercises: fill in the blanks, complete the sentences, then generate your own sentences.

We deal with these errors carefully and introduce them *one at a time.* No correction is made, nor are errors indicated on the class members' writing. Instead, we use models and exercises. If students begin spontaneously to correct their own errors, and some will, that's well and good. But the emphasis of teaching is still *fluency,* particularly in the free writings.

Now for two weeks students have been doing regular free writings. We collect and keep these in individual folders in the Writing Center. The instructor reads them all and writes *only* positive comments to identify strong or interesting passages. At the end of that time, we go through the free writings and select subjects for focused free writings.

Focused Free Writings

The next step is longer papers, two or three pages, in which we ask the student to write freely whatever comes to mind on the chosen subject. The subject should emerge from the free writings and should be mutually agreeable to the student and the instructor. We look for passages that are interesting, that seem to have some spontaneity and energy behind them. If we narrow it down too much, the student has to write about something that doesn't interest him or that is emotionally threatening. We give him at least three choices. We might say, "Tell me more about your older brother," or "Did you get the job you were looking for? If you did, what's it like working there?" "You describe Puerto Rico very vividly. Can you describe a special place, or tell an incident that happened there?"

A word here on the subjects. Advanced students will spontaneously write in a variety of modes: description, analysis, exposition. But the usual developmental sequence for genuinely remedial students is more like this: description-narration-dialogue-argumentation. Our first aim is still fluency, and it's important to begin with the student's spontaneous modes. If we require her to write arguments or exposition, her fluency will suffer, as will her form and correctness. Look at this example of a student's fluent and competent use of narration:

"BIG TRIP"

It was April, 1970. I was in the hospital. I didn't want to be there, but my mother and doctor insisted. Lying in the bed, I thought of the horrible procedures one goes through having an operation. Of course it was my imagination, my mother told me, but I had a good one.

It was 9:55 a.m. The nurse came in to prepare me for this horrible journey of intoxicated sleep. She assured me that the anesthetic would be a pleasant one, and it would soon be over, as she gave me the shot of anesthetic in my right arm. Going down the hall, the nurse had realized that the local anesthetic was given to me in the wrong location, so she had to give me another one, which was in my hip. "Oh no, I'll never wake up," I said to myself.

In front of the operating room, I commenced to sleep. GREEN, BLUE, and YELLOW monsters were floating in my head. It was frightening. My eyes opened instantly, and my heart was pounding. The hallucinations felt like an L.S.D. trip.

By the time I was in the operating chair, it felt as though the anesthetic had worn off. The doctor came in a gave me a shot of novocaine. My head and throat felt swollen. It was as though someone had pumpted helium into my head, and I would float out of the chair. My throat was dry. Hot flashes went through my body. I couldn't swallow. More hallucinations. I wanted my mother.

"I see you're ready," said the doctor. When I looked into his face, it was a big balloon face. He looked funny, but scary. I became frightened when he approached my throat with a pair of surgical scissors. I began choking. "DON'T COUGH," said the doctor. I was strangling with blood. I could hear the scissors ripping at my throat. It sounded like cutting of paper. Finally I could breathe when the doctor removed my tonsils.

Going back to my room, I saw my mother. The only thing I remember telling her was, "Mother, they didn't put me to sleep."

The End

Things go along more easily if we make sure students have gained fluency in description and narration before asking them to do more academic writing. Neglecting this sequence may result in a defeat which neither student nor teacher can afford.

We collected two or three focused free writings, allowing time in class to write at least one of them. They look something like this:

I wish I could get this dumb silly paper over with, I've been working on it for four days now, and I still can't bring myself to stick to one thing. What my teacher dosen't seem to realize is that it's pretty hard to just sit down and start writing a paper, tunning out everything. That maybe I didn't have time to eat breakfast before classes, or the last problem Mr. B____ "threw out" five minutes before the end of class has got me "spaced-out" and feeling more lost than I was when I first came in class. Or when I'm really getting started on my paper, really getting in deep into my thoughts, finally, finally I can think of an idea to start *a paragraph,* then comes your sister (who's in the same class as I am), who starts gapping about "how good that chinese rice was yesterday" and about "that cute guy" she met on her last spoon of egg noodles simmering in soy sauce (or something) completely wipping out all previous thought of my "great idea" for my paper. And all I could think of ~~than~~ then ~~was~~ is taking a big bowl of chinese rice, and smearing it all over that big three page paper she's just finishing.

But don't get me wrong though, really people I digs this class. When I first came into the Writing Center I knew it would be a new experience for me. I mean, the teacher and tutors are really concerned in developing our best points in English, and really helping students to gather their thoughts and putting them down on paper. To help students cut down on a paper that is really too long without explaining anything, or (as in my case) to help you lengthen a paper that is to short.

I don't know though. I've always had this problem. I could talk and talk and talk about a certain subject and have people

begging me to shut up. But let a teacher ask me write a paper (A paper I don't think I've ever wrote a paper before "Thats a shame") But just let a teacher ask me to write a paper on my views on Freud's Theory of Psychoanylisis. I can't even write a paper on my views of "The Daily Adventures of Popeye the Sailor" something I watch daily. I mean I really freeze up. My mind turns completely off. But now I'm becoming a little more relaxed in the class. I can think a little more freely now because I know I'm not alone. There are lots of people in this class with writing problems somewhat similar if not the same as mine. And I no longer feel "shy" about trying to write a paper. If it dosen't look right to my tutor, he discusses it with me and tells me what he thinks would help my paper, and helps me think more into what I am trying to write about. Without just slapping a "C" or "D" grade and telling me to write something else. Something I've experienced in my earlier years of school.

Form: The First Draft

The next stage is a draft of the final essay. The student chooses the focused free writing he thinks is most promising, and the instructor reads it, asking very specific questions for development. "Describe your brother. What does he look like? How does he talk? Tell some more incidents involving him that show what he's like." "What color was the car? What did the upholstery look like? How did it sound when it was running?"

We want the student to do several things at this level:

1. Organize the essay.
2. Develop it, giving it details, description, and dialogue. One of the tutors says, "Make it 3D." To elicit this development, we must ask specifically for what we want. "Describe this." "Tell what he said then."
3. Take out the major errors. The student should indicate paragraphs, check use of capital letters, and eliminate run-ons and comma splices.

For many students, this is asking a lot at once. We give class time for writing this draft, expecting to work individually with people who are revising their focused free writing. As the semester goes on, they need less help.

The Sequence

We try to get a variety of writing from the students, something like this:

1. Description of a person
2. Description of a place
3. Incident

4. Dialogue
5. Case history (narration used as argument)

If the student spontaneously produces other kinds of writing—argument, exposition, or analysis—I certainly accept it instead of any of the above. But most remedial students produce narration and description. We don't rush them. For dialogue, Macrorie's chapter in *Telling Writing* is useful, as are student models. The case history is usually last and is a nudge in the direction of argumentation. Typical papers are narratives used in arguments: a thesis like "The marijuana laws are too severe" illustrated by a narrative describing the experience of an acquaintance who was thrown in prison for seven years for possession of a joint; "Social Security payments are not enough to enable elderly people to live with dignity" illustrated by the experiences of an acquaintance on Social Security.

The student brings five of his focused free writings up to this level. So far, the major emphasis has been fluency, but now we introduce the idea of form, and begin to work a little on correction of major errors. When a draft is completed, it goes into the folder for further work at the end of the semester, when the focus shifts to correctness.

Grading

About this time (after Easter in the spring semester), we make the move from fluency and form to tightening and correcting. For the first time, I grade the papers. If things are going well, most drafts will be worth a C+.

"This is one of your five good papers for the semester," I say. "So far, it's a good C. If you want a higher grade, tighten it and correct the minor errors."

Final Revisions

We spend a week on tightening, using student papers which have been duplicated or put on transparencies. Work on grammar, punctuation, and spelling is largely individual, concentrating on a student's errors one or two at a time. Perhaps he has agreement problems or faulty tense endings. He works on those two problems in an exercise book, I point out where they occur in the paper, and he revises.

Some students with many errors and much determination may do yet another draft to remove misplaced commas and to correct spelling. Some students will be satisfied with the C. Generally, students do at least three versions of each paper: free writing, focused free writing, and revision. Many students do four drafts, and some do all five. As they develop as writers, the required number of revisions decreases. Here is a typical "fair copy."

> Taco Bell was the first and only job I ever had. My first day was the most horrible thing I could have ever gone through. As I walked into the back door the whole place smelled of tacos,

burritos, and every Taco Bell product there was. I didn't know anyone that worked there. I was alone and nervous. I came in ten minutes before I was to start, which is one of the many rules at Taco Bell. I sat down on a chair in the back, and when a fast ten minutes went buy, Lupe, the manager, told me to go up front.

A girl named Anna started teaching me how to make the food. There was so much to learn. How much beans to put on a burrito; how much meat to put on a taco; how much cheese and onions to put on the burrito, and how much cheese and lettuce to put on a taco.

After she went through telling me how to make every item, she made me go through it. It took a lot of correcting on her part, until I did it satisfactorily.

Anna then asked me to clean the door windows. I took my time hoping the time would pass faster.

Next she had me sweeping the floor in the front. She told me to get underneath all the cabinets. I went at it, sweeping clear under the cabinets; unfortunately I wasn't paying attention, and as I came up with the broom from sweeping under the cabinets, I heard a scream from one of the girls. To my surprise and the girl's, I had accidentally brought the broom handle right up under her dress. She happened to be taking an order at the time. She just looked at me, and I looked at her. I must have said "I'm sorry" a hundred times. I don't think she ever forgave me.

From that first day on, I was practically the only one who ever swept the floor. The broomstick incident was only the first of many.

I finally was introduced to everyone, mostly by them coming up to me and asking what my name was, and giving theirs in return. I got along nicely with everyone except Pam, the girl I broomsticked to death. I started joking around with everyone, when the managers weren't around, just to make my job easier. I ended up being known as a clown.

I was almost done for the day, when Anna asked me to do one more thing. I was to put some more ice into a square hole in the drink area. To do this, I had to take this big plastic scooper and scoop the ice cubes into the square. Of course, I'm not good at doing something for the first time and doing it right. I unfortunately didn't realize how heavy the ice was, so I accidentially dropped the ice cubes on the floor, but luckily none of the girls slipped and fell on them, except me. I didn't fall though.

Finally my three hours were up, and I knew that from this day on, this job was not going to be easy. I also knew that until I learned how to do everything at Taco Bell, everyone was going to order me around and get the best of me. I knew that if the

girls kept ordering me around, I wouldn't be able to stand it, but there was nothing I could do about it. I was a newcomer, destined to be a newcomer for the next 9 months I worked there.

Publication

One of the great technological advantages we have is the ability to reproduce student writing easily. Photocopying is ideal, but if it's too costly or not available, dittos or transparencies will do. These enable the students to have a real audience, the class members, and not just the teacher. People enjoy each other's work and take it seriously. The writer, then, begins to take her own work more seriously.

We publish many papers, from many different students. The major criterion for selection is the intrinsic interest of the piece, not correctness. That comes later.

If at all possible, we collect one good piece from each student and put them in magazine form before the end of the semester. We make just enough copies for the class and a few extra for our own collection of student models.

Thanks to a grant from Lawrence Davis, the president at Laney, we publish three issues annually of a magazine of faculty and student writing called *Goodnews*. We regularly include samples of good writing from the remedial classes as well as from the advanced students. The following paper was written in the Writing Center by a basic writing student who had never written a "real paper" before. He was convinced that he couldn't write and unhappy with his attempt, so he turned it in to his instructor crumpled into a ball. Here is the final version which was published in *Goodnews:*

MY FATHER—THE MAN AND HIS WORK

by Bernard Peyton

We lived in a small farming community in northern Mississippi, and with the exception of a small sawmill in the area, and of course housework for the women, farming was the only work open to blacks in the nineteen fiftys.

My father chose not to be a farmer unlike his father before him; instead he chose to leave home at a very early age to go to work in a lumber camp, and he made that his life's work. My father was a big man who stood over seven feet and weighed well over three hundred pounds. His personality had two extremes. He could be the gentle giant that he was to me, the youngest of his ten children. He loved dogs and mules. Mules came first for they were his work. His philosophy was, "A logger is as good as his mules; his mules are as good as he treats them." So Sam and Rusty, the two giant iron greys that he was so proud of, had no complaints, and neither did Ludy and Troy, the two black and tan

hounds that he had trained since pups to be "the best damn coon dogs in Mississippi," as he'd say. Or he could be as mean and distructive as a mad grizzly, like the time a local merchant called him a liar in a dispute over the balance of a grocery bill he owed. He chased the merchant from the store and left the store in chambles.

He worked very hard and enjoyed the distinction of being the best logger in those parts. He enjoyed the beauty of the forest and did his bit to preserve it, even at a time when most thought our forest land was so vast it would last forever. He marked every tree so that it caused as little damage as possible to other trees when it fell.

Being a logger didn't offer the security of being a sharecropper, which was just another name for slavery in most cases. In winter, when the weather was bad, loggers couldn't work, creating hardships for their families. It didn't matter to farmers; after the harvest there was nothing for them to do until Spring. But even that didn't lure him from his trade. Beside the genuine satisfaction he got from his work, he felt that a man could only be a man when allowed to think for himself. So he spent his winters hunting, cutting and selling firewood, when the weather would allow it, or just sitting by the fire telling funny stories or teaching me and my brothers to sing harmony. In the winter of nineteen fifty-eight he caught pneumonia and died.

General Outline for an 18-Week Course

This is not an inflexible pattern, but just an aid to clarify the general sequence:

First week: Free writings in class, 10-15 minutes.
Student models of effective fragments.

Second week: Free writings in class, 15 minutes.
Discussion of samples of class members' effective fragments.

Third week: Introduction of short pieces: student models.
Focused free writings on subjects taken from free writings, 2-3 pages each.
Begin editing exercises from student models: paragraphing.

Fourth week: Continue focused free writings in and out of class. Try to get seven or eight.
Publish examples of interesting focused free writings by class members and discuss what makes them effective.
Editing exercises on student models: capitalization, comma splices and run-ons.

Fifth week:	Continue focused free writings. Publish interesting class papers. Continue editing student models: comma splices and run-ons.
Sixth, seventh, eighth weeks:	Continue pattern of fifth week.
Ninth week:	Begin revisions. Select five best focused free writings of each student. Have the student choose one. Rewrite the focused free writing, working on development, organization, and elimination of major errors. Paper is graded, and specific suggestions made if student wants to tighten and correct minor errors for a better grade.
Tenth week:	Student chooses another focused free writing for revision. Revisions are graded and the best are published for the class at large and discussed.
Eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth weeks:	Continue pattern of tenth week.
Fourteenth week:	Some students will have completed the semester's work. They are given a final grade based on their five best papers and dismissed until the final. Individual work with remaining students on revisions or additional exercises for special grammatical problems.
Fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth weeks:	Continue pattern of fourteenth week.
Eighteenth	Final exam. In-class essay on unannounced topic. Best paper of each student is published in magazine form, distributed at the final exam.

I can hear my colleagues now objecting to all this prescriptive stuff. They are not to worry. My experience as a consultant has proved to me that teachers never do what they're told to do. Instead, they very sensibly take what they can use and change the rest. But they really do want to know exactly what it is that other people do. Well, this is what I do, more or less. Unless there's some good reason to do something different.

I heard an artist once defend the paint-by-numbers kits on the same grounds. He thought the kits were reprehensible until he discovered that very few really followed the directions. Instead, finding himself with a brush in his hand and paint on the brush, each person proceeded to make his own distinctive changes in pattern and color. Finally, most lost patience with the kits entirely and struck out on their own with blank sheets of paper. I'm convinced that the teachers will take all this careful advice equally lightly.

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